

A VACATION IN QUEBEC.

BY G. EIFRIG.

On the 21st of June the writer left Chicago for Ottawa, Ontario, for the purpose of renewing old acquaintances, among the human kind in the beautiful capital of the Dominion, and among the birds in the woods across the Ottawa River in old Quebec. Another useful purpose of the trip was to get out of the lungs the atmosphere and dust of the classroom and to temporarily blot out of the memory all recollection of it.

The study of Natural History from a moving train, while necessarily superficial and largely uncertain, is yet not to be despised. It is both interesting and instructive to see e.g., the prairie flora of northern Illinois, with its wealth of *Phlox tradescantia*, *eryngium*, *silphium*, *senecio*, etc., give way to the orchards and sugar beets of Michigan, to notice how large areas even in such a fine state as the Badger-state, and in such a fine province as Ontario, are waste land, utterly unsuitable for agriculture, how the Mourning Dove and Red-headed Woodpecker are common up to Toronto but absent north of it, how the farm houses there become smaller and farther apart, but granite boulders and lakes more plentiful. And here also the landscape is more and more dominated by those fine northern evergreen forests. To me the finest deciduous woods of oak, hickory and beech have never been so enticing, so mysteriously charming and attractive as those dark, silent evergreen forests of the northland.

My first station, by prearrangement, was to be at Inlet P. O., about forty miles northeast of Ottawa. The first half of this distance is covered in a Canadian Pacific train to Thurso, where connections had to be made with a mail driver, who takes one out the rest of the way. Here the numerous colonies of Chimney Swift and Purple Martin strike one. Of the latter, indeed, every, even the tiniest hamlet in these parts seems to have at least one thriving colony. House Wrens are also numerous in the towns, about farm houses, and also

right in the wilderness. On a knoll at the edge of the village, the site of the public school, were heard and seen the Pine Warbler, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Least Flycatcher, many Chipping Sparrows, also one each of Catbird, Baltimore Oriole, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird, while the Phoebe was on a nest in the woodshed.

Inlet is no town, no village, not even a hamlet, but just a post office, a log cabin, which is at the same time the home of the lively little Alsatian-German postmaster. It is situated in the Laurentian hills, granite; sand, woods, lakes and swamps everywhere, but extremely poor land for the agriculturist, and one can but wonder what induced the few scattered farmers here to come into such a wilderness, when good land was to be had just as cheap near the Ottawa River and the railway. There were slight frosts even as late as June 26th. But to return to the birds.

Despite the chilliness of the morning half-past four found me in the low-lying spruce-cedar swamp, which begins at the end of the post office farm yard. Here a chorus of tiny bird songs green one—the Chickadee's *tsree-tsray*, the Brown Creeper's and Red-breasted Nuthatch's feeble, lisping song, and the Golden-crowned Kinglet's odd performance, which in volume and form stands between the songs of the Blackpoll and Black and White Warblers, but is more rapid and crescendo, making the impression that the performer is rapidly sliding from the interior of the tree out along a branch to its tip. A Parula Warbler sings from the top of a tall spruce, nearby are the Black-throated Blue and the Black-throated Green and Canada Warblers, while the Nashville is partial to stands of aspen and the Chestnut-sided to bushes on slightly higher ground.

Of Finches the purple one may often be heard pouring out his soul in song from the tip of a tree, and the ever-present White-throated Sparrow repeats his "Dear, dear Canada, Canada," as the song is paraphrased by loyal sons of King George's dominion. This bird is just as characteristic of bushy swamps and bogs as of dry knolls which are covered

with bracken and black stumps. The Indigo Bunting is sparingly found, the Goldfinch commonly. In the alders along the Inlet, the creek near by, may at times be heard the queer saw-filing of the Saw-whet Owl.

From the low woods, with the fine large white and black spruces (*Picea canadensis* and *mariana*) we now turn to higher ground, toward the lakes among the hills. Along the road are found families of Slate-colored Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*), the streaked young nearly full grown. However, here and there a male darts out from some well-concealed little pocket in the bank along the road, and on looking there we find nests containing four fresh eggs, evidently the second laying. Their nests would rarely be found, so well hidden are they, if the birds would not betray their location by flying out. In the higher woods, usually near a little gurgling brook, a loud *cha* may be heard, anxiously repeated, and then the song: "*Take care*," plaintively uttered. This is the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in its typical haunts, viz. mixed woods full of old tops of trees all moss and lichen covered. A female Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) with her family of young is surprised, and at once raises a great disturbance, fluttering at our feet, clucking and gurgling in the most startling manner. They are common here.

At Gull Lake the Herring Gull is seen. It breeds there. From the stern towering walls of granite the laughing of the Loon and the rattling of the Belted Kingfisher are echoed back over the otherwise silent lake. Going to Hawk Lake a nest of White-throated Sparrow is found two feet from the ground in a small cedar bush. We found several nests on the ground or up in the bushes. While we were paddling across the lake a family of Hooded Mergansers (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) were started up. They pattered over the water, half flying, at a great rate of speed, until the bushes along the edge of an island took them into their protective shade. Here also the Kingbird sallies forth after its winged prey. It surprises one somewhat to find such farm-yard and orchard birds as Robin, Chipping Sparrow and Kingbird in

the role of true woodland and wilderness birds. Incidentally we caught some fine red and gray trout in Hawk Lake which, when prepared by the skilful hands of the wife of the owner of the lake, made a dish not soon to be forgotten. These trout are undoubtedly the finest food fish in eastern North America, if not in the world. They rapidly deteriorate in the sending, even if packed in ice. I can recommend Hawk Lake to sportsmen and fish connoisseurs as a place where both interests can be exceedingly well attended to.

Returning, an uproar among some Robins attracted our attention, and on investigating we found a Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) in close proximity to a Robin family. This hawk had certainly much increased here since my last visit, three years ago; its loud whistle, *keef*, something like a Cowbird's only louder and huskier, was not infrequently heard. Speaking of bird voices, the song of the Winter Wren must receive honorable mention. It may be heard at any time of day, but sounds finest early in the morning, when its clear, sparkling tones always made the impression on me as though delicate strands of silver were being woven from branch to branch among the dark spruces and hemlocks, whence the song usually emanates. This bird is most often found in mossy mixed woods, but conifers must be close at hand. The song is a continuous performance, much more so than the songs of the Veery and Hermit and Olive-backed Thrushes, which, however, have a finer quality of tone and greater volume. Along the shores of Hawk Lake we often heard a strident song, something like that of the Red-eyed Vireo, but louder, which turned out to be a to me new song of the Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga erythromelas*). It was not often the *tick kerr*, usually heard, nor the soft decrescendo song to be heard in western Maryland, but a more robust and less attractive one. In the evening the Whip-poor-will usually started its song at 8:45 o'clock.

After having celebrated Dominion Day, July 1st, at Ottawa, I on the 2d went partly by rail and partly by boat up the Lievre to Notre Dame de la Salette, a French-Canadian

hamlet on the river, which had on Easter day of 1910, been overwhelmed by one of the none too rare landslides, with a resulting death list of thirty persons, the bodies of some of which have never been found. From there I was driven to the humble abode of a small farmer, in the midst of the wilderness, between Holland's Mills and High Falls. With several small patches of arable soil carved out of the dense tangled woods, more or less surrounded by high rocky hills, knolls of almost bare granite, with swampy ponds between, it seemed surprising that these German farmers are able, by sheer indomitable energy and hard labor, not only to eke out a bare existence, but are even able to lay aside small sums of money against a rainy day. Here the same birds were met with as at Inlet, with the addition of a few. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers (*Phlæotomus pileatus abieticola*) apparently had their young in a hole high up in one of the large trees along the brook, which runs at the foot of a long, high hill. To the repertoire of notes which I had recorded in my bird ledger they added another, a clucking, soft *kyuck*. Sometimes I started them from the ground. The Oven-bird and Northern Yellow-throat were a little more abundant here too, also the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and the Rusty Blackbird. These last are on the increase. Their typical habitats are the ponds and watercourses in the woods where, on a former occasion, I found a family of young just out of the nest. The young were at this time fully grown. On Lac Ste. Helene a huge Osprey nest was seen on a tall dead tree called ram-pike here. From the marshy corners of the lakes, from the highest tip of the spruces, was heard the "*Hood, take care,*" of the Olive-sided Flycatcher, and in similar locations a brood of young Black Duck were seen. Nests of Chipping Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, White-throated Sparrow, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were found, all with fresh eggs, while nests of Cedar Waxwing and Kingbirds contained young, and one of Goldfinch in a small birch was ready for eggs. A pair of Mourning Warblers in the underbrush in a clearing showed by their anxiety their nest to be near at

hand, but search failed to reveal it. A Barn Swallow had built its nest on a pulley swinging from a rope in the small log barn, and House Wrens had their full complement of eggs in several hollow ends of fence rails. A Phoebe sat on the second set of eggs and they were nearly ready to hatch. The young of another Sayornis had died in the nest and were now dry and hard, but the parent would from time to time fly on the nest and brood them, as though trying to restore them to life. Certainly a pathetic picture!

Large bunches of the fine white admiral butterfly (*Basilarchia arthemis*) dotted the wood-roads. On the way to High Falls a Marsh Hawk was seen and a captive Goshawk (*Astur atricapillus*) awaited me. It had been caught in a trap and had lost all its accustomed ferocity. Here were great numbers of old and young Bank, Barn, and Tree Swallows, also Cedar Waxwings. The stomach of a young, but fully grown, Broad-winged Hawk, which had stupidly been shot by a farmer's boy contained at least a hundred black beetles. Another one was drying itself after a shower on a very warm day, by fanning the air with its wings. This was near the fine waterfall from which the locality gets its name.

Bidding the good and hospitable people good-bye, I again took the little boat on the Leve to go to Buckingham and thence back to Ottawa. This time the boat was nearly filled to suffocation with French-Canadians, who were on their annual pilgrimage to St. Anne de Beaupré — one of the dark spots of Quebec!

On July 16th I embarked on a gasoline launch at Pembroke, Ontario, a hundred miles west of Ottawa, to go to Tapp's Wharf, and from there to Pontiac Game Club, about fifteen miles north from the river. Between the many islands, one of which contained a heronry of Great Blue Herons, past an old Hudson Bay post, with Indian church, past Oiseaux Rock, on top of which is said to be a small lake containing excellent trout, we sped over the "Deep River," as the Ottawa is here called — it is said to be a thousand or more feet

deep. The Pontiac Game Club's preserve comprises 180 acres, no farms, only hills covered with fine forest which comes right down to the water's edge of the beautiful lakes, of which there are about 60 known. Moose, bear, deer and porcupine signs were extremely plentiful here, and I had the good fortune to photograph a bull moose which was standing in the shallow water of a creek connecting two lakes, eating lily pads. Beaver are also busy here. Of birds, about the same were seen as in the former places, only in varying numbers. Northern Flickers were common here, also warblers, of which I found a family of young Nashville just out of the nest. A solitary Hairy Woodpecker was noticed. They are rare, it seems, all over their range. I did not at this time meet with the two Three-toed Woodpeckers, although they are common in fall and winter, as are the Canada Jay and the Spruce Partridge (*Canachites canadensis canace*). Wood Pewee, Alder, Least, and Olive-sided Flycatchers were all represented here, and each lake naturally harbors its pair or two of Loons. Goshawks, Cooper's and Broad-winged Hawks were seen, and a single Canada Jay among a flock of Blue Jays. A number of pike and fine pickerel or doré were caught. Bidding good-bye to mine host, the keeper of the preserve, and his family, to the clear ozone-laden air, the beautiful lakes resembling so many artistically framed pictures, to the interesting fauna and flora, I next went to Lake Doré, near Eganville, Ontario, a few miles south of the Ottawa River. I put up in the humble cabin of a small farmer near the lake. To get to the lake one had to paddle in a boat down a creek with dark water — hemlock-stained — through a typical cedar swamp. The Wood Duck nests here, also the Great Horned Owl. Nearer the lake in the ash trees is a large heronry, with many fully grown young awkwardly flapping about. Then comes a stretch of swamp, with bushes and cattails, the home of the Swamp Sparrow, Rails, and Long-billed Marsh Wrens. Farther out are Coots, Golden-eyes, Buffle-heads, Grebes, Loons, and Herring Gulls. Four Loons were one morning seen flying over the farm,

calling loudly, and in the evening four, probably the same ones, returned to the lake. Rusty Blackbirds were abundant, and the farmer, a shrewd observer of nature, said he had never before seen them. He knew the Red-wings and Bronzed Grackles, plentiful in the swamp, well. Neither had I seen them here on my frequent visits several years previously. So there can be no doubt that this species, as also the Broad-winged Hawk and Indigo Bunting, are on the increase here. An Osprey was seen carrying a large fish lengthwise, and a Kingbird and Red-wings viciously assaulting a Great Blue Heron. Along the water's edge and elsewhere Solitary and Spotted Sandpipers are seen, and here and there a Water-Thrush daintily and measuredly walking under the overhanging bushes. The pike are so voracious that even a poor fisherman like myself can easily catch a goodly mess by trolling.

Finally I had to reluctantly leave this fine spot also and drive back to the station and to civilization. If one could only get away from its stress oftener and hie himself away into these places near the heart of nature! These vacation days spent in the Canadian backwoods will not soon be forgotten. However, in justice to any prospective sojourners in the Northland, I must also point out the drawbacks, viz. the swarms of mosquitoes, black flies and sand flies, which can make life miserable, which I overcame only with head-net. The roads to such places are bad. But these things are taken into the bargain by the true nature lover and are soon forgotten.

THE WINTER BIRDS OF ALGONQUIN PARK, ONTARIO.

BY ALLEN CLEGHORN.

Algonquin Park is one of the national parks of Ontario. It is situated about 200 miles north of Toronto and has been under government supervision for twenty years. It consists of over 2,000,000 acres (roughly speaking, about 45x50 miles)